

**CLASS at Wisdom's Goldenrod, Hector, NY
with Anthony Damiani (AD)
August 29, 1984
PB PARAS; EGO**

TOPIC: PB Paras
SUBJECT: Ego

SUBSUBJECTS: Glimpse, Short Path, Understanding, Serpent's Path, Two Kinds of Consciousness, Sage

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BOOKS READ FROM OR REFERENCED:

- Paul Brunton, *Notebooks*. 16 vols; Vol. 1 entitled *Perspectives* [*Persp.*].
- Paul Brunton, *The Quest of the Overself*
- Paul Brunton, *The Wisdom of the Overself*
- Plotinus, *The Enneads* (MacKenna translation, 4th ed.)
- Vyasa, *Bhagavad Gita*
- Marc Edmund Jones, *The Astrology of Concepts*

SABIAN SYMBOLS: Virgo 17, Libra 6

PLOTINUS QUOTES READ OR REFERENCED: VI.5.7

NOTES:

- Earlier transcript versions exist.

TRANSCRIBED from Audio Cassette Tapes by HP, et al. in 1993 as part of the set for *Standing in Your Own Way*. V11 version 2018. Reformatted from V11 version by JRM & JF 2019-2020, with Subheads and Table of Contents added by JRM. In 2024, IT updates prefatory matter and footer, replaces tape markers with audio file markers, expands Subsubjects, alters most Subheads to make more accurate, completes Book List, adds Plotinus quotes section, fixes errors/typos, adds new notes within transcript, reformats to accord with new conventions. In 2025, IT updates audio file markers to match new REP audio. **Readable edited transcript – V14.1r.**

AUDIO FILES: 1984 0829a, 19840 829b. [Note 1: “Tape” and “Side” refer to original audio cassette tapes that were later digitized into .MP3 Audio Files. Note 2: Audio File 1984 0829a was originally recorded back to front, i.e., Side 2 followed by Side 1; REP Studio fixes in 2024.]

1984 08/29 at Wisdom's Goldenrod

PB Paras; Ego

Readable Edited Transcript

GLIMPSE OF IMAGELESS BEING; SHORT PATH

[Audio File 1984 0829a Begins]

JC: It's the long one in the middle of the page. (reading)

PB: "It is objected, why search at all if one really is the Overself? Yes, there comes a time when the deliberate purposeful search for the Overself has to be abandoned for this reason. Paradoxically, it is given up many times, whenever he has a Glimpse, for at such moments he knows that he always was, is, and will be the Real, that there is nothing new to be gained or searched for. Who should search for what? But the fact remains that past tendencies of thought rise up after every Glimpse and overpower the mind, causing it to lose this insight and putting it back on the quest again. While this happens he must continue the search, with this difference, that he no longer searches blindly, as in earlier days, believing that he is an ego trying to transform itself into the Overself, trying to reach a new attainment in time by evolutionary stages. No! through the understanding of the Short Path he searches knowingly, not wanting another experience since both wanting and experiencing put him out of the essential Self. He thinks and acts as if he is that Self, which puts him back into It. It is a liberation from time-bound thinking, a realization of timeless fact." (23.6.110/Persp. p. 317)

(Q: quote read again)

(Q: Anthony says nothing, perhaps is not in the room the whole first side of the tape)

(Side 1 of original cassette tape digitized as 1984 0829a Ends; Side 2 Begins)

(Q: student discussion continues about 1 minute.)

AD: Jeff, did you meditate on this?

JC: Did I?

AD: This is one of those that requires a little meditation. If you meditate on this then you'd say to yourself "I won't use this example because what would be required here would be a glimpse." Now if I had a glimpse of being the Overself, in other words, I am sitting down and instead of saying Tennyson I am saying "Tony, Tony," I keep saying it to myself and all of a sudden--I AM-- not qualified by anything, but that's all, I am. And it is the most authentic I am that can be. There's no qualification, there is no saying WHAT I am or WHO I am, I just am. I have the experience of BEING and it is imageless. And then all of a sudden this character comes along and says: "You were"--boom! It takes over and that I am is gone. That presence that I knew myself to be, that being that I was, is gone. I would have to try to remind you, "Jeff, were you ever in love? You know what it is like to be inspired, in love?" And you say "Yes." "But are you there now?" "No!" "Get there." "I can't. And anything I do will just keep me away from it." So it is very subtle. You have to have the experience of yourself as authentic. And it is a perception of the subtle, in the sense that it is the subtlest of the subtlest. And then when it leaves, it doesn't leave actually, it is that the ego comes in and claims you again. It says "Wait a minute, this is my

life, this isn't you." At that moment, that it reclaims that life for itself, at that moment you could have the feeling, "Well, I have an idea what it means to say I am or to experience myself as pure being." I can remember the example he gives of Tennyson. He used to say his name to himself, "Alfred Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson," and he would go into a reverie. And then everything would drop away and there would be just his being, his I AM, the way he is. He is that, that's all. And that is a kind of self recognition. You don't have to go into Plotinus for this, this is something that I think even children at times experience, their own being. You catch them, you know. "Your dinner!" "Huh, huh!" At that moment they were experiencing themselves. But as soon as you bring in any foreign thought, boom, then the ego takes over again.

So if you don't have that experience of the glimpse then it is very hard to understand. How on the one hand--you know that you are that, once you have the glimpse, you know what that is, what your real being is like, and that now you can go after it knowingly. Prior to having HAD that you don't know what that is. So even if it DAWNS on you it is very possible that you may not be aware that that's YOU. So it's a quote I would keep away from. (laughter)

LaurieD: Don't feed your kid anymore.

AD: You think about it, and you'll see why I say you have to give a quote considerable thought to see if it is something you could handle. And sometimes it will be and sometimes it won't be. But that is a very subtle thing, to have the experience. You know what it is to be in love, but you are not in love now. In the same way, you know what it is to have the experience, and it's not an "experience," alright. You know what it is to be, BE, you know what it is! As soon as you introduce one thought, it is over. So it's a very difficult quote.

JC: I agree that I can't talk about this quote from the inside but it does raise philosophical problems I have about the relation of the Overself to experience. When you say boom, the ego is back. What is the "boom"?

AD: If we took the example of the child who is blankly staring into space, and you remind him that he has to eat, what's the "boom"? Has that light or that Overself-consciousness now identified with the ego? And the ego will CLAIM it for its own. (pause) But it isn't as hard as you make it sound because in some ways it is easier. You just relax, absolutely relaxed, and you keep saying to yourself, "Jeff Cox, Jeff Cox," etcetera you keep thinking, just a theme, yes you can use a mantram but it is just a theme until that spreads away, until that dissolves. And there's just this feeling that you are. That feeling that you are, you can't think it, because thinking is not that feeling that you are, that feeling of be-ing, be-hyphenated-ing, that feeling of be-ing, that's not a thought. Could I put it that way--that's not a thought. YOU ARE. It only takes an instant for the ego to reclaim that. Then the whole thing (Q: or 'everything'--hard to hear) is spoiled. Don't make it bigger than that. That's all he wants to remind you of.

KD: How can thinking and the memory of that experience bring you back into this thought-free realization, if that experience of being is outside of thoughts and images?

AD: By definition if we say it is a state of being and not a state of thinking, how could any thought bring you there?

KD: But he says: "He thinks and acts as if he is that Self, which puts him back into It."

AD: I didn't follow your question. Ask your question.

KD: After the experience of the glimpse which is thought-free, the experience of being without images, after you lose the glimpse, you use the memory of that and it brings you back into it. Why is that possible?

AD: The memory now, really what you are doing is using the short path. You CLAIM that you ARE it. In other words, if you had the experience once, and then you try to duplicate it, you are practicing the As-If exercise, "I am the Overself."

KD: But thinking--

AD: No, no, you are not thinking when you are acting out the role, or you're acting out to BE this Overself, to be this consciousness. You're not thinking there. In other words, the short path you don't THINK that you ARE the Overself, you ACT as though you ARE the Overself. There's a big difference there.

KD: So when he said that you recall that image of that experience, you recall the memory of it, and you reabsorb yourself into the memory of it.

AD: Yes.

KD: But that is using the imagination.

AD: Sure, there's nothing wrong with using that.

KD: The memory is the imagination.

AD: There is nothing wrong in using it (Q: the imagination) as long as you don't stay with it, and don't take it to be what you are striving after. To be--alright, you can't imagine to be, but you can use images to help you to get there. There is nothing wrong with that as long as you remember that they are images and that you have to get rid of them. Try this very abstract way, I am. Do you have to have an image? Alright, let's say you have to have an image. But little by little you could get rid of the image and you can become very abstract until you reach the point where you ARE without any images. And that is an experience that I think many of us have had, when we are sitting down and momentarily we forget ourselves. At that moment you ARE, but as soon as there is a thought or a reflection it is gone. Is that familiar? That is what he is getting at, in the quote, that feeling of just being. Once you have it, then you know what it is you have to go after, in a knowing way, you'll have some idea of what it is. But if you don't have it, let's say you never had anything like that, then you have no idea what it is that is this Self that you are talking about or trying to get to. That's why I am trying to get back to some experience that you might have had where you are quietly relaxed or sitting back or whatever the occasion may be and there isn't a thought and it is a moment of forgetfulness and absent-mindedness and then you recall back, at that moment that you recall, thinking starts. But prior to that it is just be-ing. Be, hyphen, -ing. It doesn't ask for any images. Like Plotinus says, "to be without images is to know."

KD: But I thought that quote was "to know without images is be." (Q: see Ennead VI.5.7, first para)

KNOWING WILLING AND FEELING OPERATE THROUGH THE FORM OF PERCEPTION PROVIDED BY THE BODY; DISSOCIATING FROM THOUGHT-TENDENCIES

LouisD: (reading)

PB: “Everything we do or say, feel or think, is related back to the ego. We live tethered to its post and move in a circle. The spiritual quest is really an attempt to break out of this circle. From another point of view it is a long process of uncovering what is deeply hidden by our ego, with its desires, emotions, passions, reasonings, and activities. Taking still another point of view, it is a process of dissociating ourselves from them. But it is unlikely that the ego could be induced to end its own rule willingly. Its deceptive ways and tricky habits may lead an aspirant into believing that he is reaching a high stage when he is merely travelling in a circle. The way to break out of this circle is either to seek out the ego’s source or, where that is too difficult, to become closely associated and completely obedient to a true Master. The ego, being finite, cannot produce an infinite result by its own efforts. It spins out its thoughts and sends out its desires day after day. They may be likened to cobwebs which are renewed or increased and which never disappear for long from the darkened corners of a room, however often they may be brushed away. So long as the spider is allowed to live there, so long will they reappear again. Tracking down the ego to its lair is just like hunting out the spider and removing it altogether from the room. There is no more effective or faster way to attain the goal than to ferret out its very source, offer the ego to that Source, and finally by the path of affirmations and recollections unite oneself with it.” (8.4.393 //Persp. p. 95)

(Q: quote read quote again)

LouisD: I would like to try going line by line, “Everything we do or say, feel or think, is related back to the ego.” I tried looking at this that right away, he’s bringing in the three functions of the human being: willing, feeling, or thinking. And now whatever happens in any mode is related back to this initial ego or I thought.

AD: That was the end of your explanation of the first sentence?

LD: Yes, that willing, feeling, thinking, in the mode that I experience them, in any combination, is related to this original urge or desire--

AD: Related back to what?

LouisD: Desire, for me.

AD: Body. The form of perception is the ground in which willing, feeling and knowing is operating (Q: or ‘operative’). If you speak about consciousness or mind incarnating into a body, from that moment on that it is what it is going to be tethered to. So the body is the form of perception and the willing, knowing and feeling is going to be what the form of perception provides TO these cognitive modes. So it’s four things.

LD: So perception, and willing, knowing, feeling.

AD: If I talk about something I know, I am talking about what I know through my body. If I talk about something I feel, it is something I feel through my body. So the body is the medium through which the

experience is going to take place. It is the form of perception. These cognitive modes operate through that form of perception. Now every image that (is coming to/has come into) your mind is going to be, so to speak, something that is available to knowing, willing, and feeling. That's the form of perception. Try the next sentence.

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: "... We live tethered to its post and move in a circle. . . ."

AD: Of course, you know, nature has tied you to this body. Even the Vedantists are tied to this body. And everything that you are thinking about or know about or feel or will is going to be in relation to that body!

LD: That seems very true, what you are saying, I mean more true than any kind of abstraction, although the only question that would arise is that there is this initial I-thought.

AD: You could go beyond it, I am not saying that you have to stick with it, but you are stuck with it to begin with, so that the entirety of all these images is going to constitute your repertoire. That is what you are tethered to, all these past images.

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: "... The spiritual quest is really an attempt to break out of this circle. . . ."

AD: Stop right there. "The spiritual quest is an attempt to break out of this circle," the circle being what? This identification of the consciousness with the body and its functioning.

LD: I looked at this as the spiritual quest is an attempt, he's mainly putting this in the form of willing. The way I saw it was he goes into the three functions initially, and then he makes three different views of it. . . . "The spiritual quest is really an attempt to break out of this circle." [Q: That's] One view.

PB: "... From another point of view it is a long process of uncovering what is deeply hidden by our ego, with its desires, emotions, passions, reasonings, and activities. . . ."

AD: That simply means that it is going to take a long time to get underneath the nature of the thought tendencies that constitute your personality. It's got nothing to do with the three modes of knowing. In other words, this group of tendencies which in their togetherness constitute your personality, is what you have to burrow underneath it to get to the "I" that you are.

LD: So that would be a process of analyzing.

AD: You can call it the quest. It is a part of the quest.

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: "... Taking still another point of view, it is a process of dissociating ourselves from them. . . ."

LD: "From them," I would imagine goes back to the emotions, passions, reasonings, and activities, so dissociate from--

AD: All the images that in their totality constitute what we call your repertoire, what you think that you are. To dissociate from that is part of the quest.

LD: That's like what you were saying before "to know without images is to be."

AD: Yes.

LD: But that's jumping to the conclusion of that.

AD: Most people would be concerned--insofar as they are concerned with knowing, willing, and feeling, it would be with those images that the body is providing them with.

LdS: Louis, there's three points of view that you were mentioning right in the middle of those three sentences you just read. Is that where you were going to make the correlation?

LD: Yeah, but I think it's better to just skip it.

AD: It's better to work with me. Go ahead. Go on with the next one. I told you, you have to sit down and meditate with these things.

LD: I did try, I really did try.

AD: Then you'll follow.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING VS. UNDERSTANDING (LIGHT) ITSELF

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: "...But it is unlikely that the ego could be induced to end its own rule willingly. Its deceptive ways and tricky habits may lead an aspirant into believing that he is reaching a high stage when he is merely travelling in a circle. . . ."

AD: You know there are many people, for instance, who--let's say--when we have a discussion and they say, "I understand you." They also assume that they have the light too. They think that the light of the understanding or the understanding is the same as the light. They say, "I understand you." Good, fine, that's conceptual. That's not the understanding yet that I am speaking of which is the LIGHT of the consciousness. So that's where many people get deluded. In the *Bhagavad Gita* they make that into quite a big point. You have to be careful that when you DO understand, let's say a spiritual truth, that you keep it in its proper place, that you understand it conceptually, you know it is conceptual understanding you have and that you have not so to speak received the LIGHT itself. So I could speak about the light of the understanding, I could speak about the understanding but they are distinct.

LD: The ego will trick me into thinking that I really know something.

AD: Yes.

AS: Although you began by saying that those three functions take the form of the ego can that light of understanding also be in those three modes or does that have to be just the pure awareness?

AD: (softly) No, it is not pure awareness. It is awareness but not pure awareness. It is not the modes themselves, I mean when you understand what that light is, it isn't that you are thinking something or you're feeling something, it is the actual light that is behind the manifested universe.

AS: So that it is beyond those three. It's not modalized.

AD: No.

LD: But cannot the light behind those three modes manifest through one of those modes?

AD: Yes, but once it manifests through those modes it is no longer that light.

AS: You're still speaking about intelligence now, pure intelligence.

AD: In other words the light behind manifestation is one thing, but as soon as that light gets manifested it's another thing. Now, I ask you what is it that you understand? Is it the light behind manifestation or the light as manifestation?

AS: Is that the Overself's intelligence? Would you call it that?

AD: You can call it the intelligence of the Overself or you can call it intelligence (inaudible).

AH: Does that suggest, Anthony, that if you don't understand the first one, that you go in a circle? If you don't understand the light as understanding, the light OF the understanding, then there is a circular path that you must go in? And there is no real spiritual life until that light is present.

AD: I wouldn't say there is no spiritual life, it's the beginning.

AH: But you couldn't say there was anything authentically spiritual?

AD: Well, it depends, it's hard to say. You can't say that a person who is studying these things is NOT inclined toward the spiritual. But you can't say that it is spiritual yet. You know, don't be drastic about it.

AH: I was trying to understand that light as the spirit.

(pause)

AD: What would the assumption be, that if you're trying to UNDERSTAND that light as spirit, then that's not the light you want.

AH: If I try to understand the light as spirit, I presuppose it's not the light I want?

AD: You want to get directly to the light, why try to understand it as light? Get directly to it. Go directly to it.

LD: So then again that would be knowing without images. You would have to be that light to really--

AD: Yes.

LD: --[Q: know it] otherwise you set up a dual subject-object.

AD: It's being.

AH: It's just that it seems that unless that light was in the understanding, you would have no way of judging one understanding from another. All images would be on an absolutely relative level. It seems it would be the principle of judgment in some way. The principle of certitude in some way.

AD: Well yes it is all those things, but then you would have to get into how does it do what it does. And I'd like to avoid that right now.

“WHO AM I?” VS. SERPENT’S PATH; TWO KINDS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PB: “. . . The way to break out of this circle is either to seek out the ego’s source . . .”

LD: Which I would bring back to the three views of the quest he previously brought out would be attempts to seek out the ego’s source.

PB: “. . . or, where that is too difficult, to become closely associated and completely obedient to a true Master. . . .”

LD: The first way “to seek out the ego’s source” he seems to be speaking real direct like when I was reading--the example of Ramana would come up where he just at 17 just bang!, he went right to the source. He didn’t have to go through a master, at least this time.

AD: Could you tell us what Ramana did?

LD: He laid down, he said, “I want to experience death.” I forget exactly. He wanted to experience what death would be like and then he laid down, he analyzed the body still, and the thoughts, and emotions, they all became still but he still experienced himself as I am, as being, I would say.

AD: So through the very intense inquiry into the nature of his mind or thoughts he was led to the very source of that, in other words the I AM which sustained all of that. That’s one way to get to it. Isn’t that also the way PB has in the *Quest*? In the *Quest* he uses that. “I am not my body. I am not my feelings. I am not my thoughts. I am not my perceptions.” So he is analyzing the nature of mind and all its products until it takes him right to the source of this intuitive feeling of the I AM. This sense of BEING without being anything in particular.

LR: Why is that different from doing the Serpent’s Path exercise?

AD: . . . In the Serpent’s Path what you are trying to do is achieve identity with the Void Mind, that is, the mind of the universe. Whereas when you are going through an analysis of who you are and what you are I don’t think you are going to achieve an identity with the Void Mind as much as identity WITH your own I AM. That seems to be more psychological.

LR: Anthony I follow it conceptually. One idea is an exercise to get you to the World-Idea and the other is an exercise to get you to the soul, but if you were really able to get through all the thoughts which are put out by the ego why wouldn’t you also land in what you were essentially.

AD: Why wouldn’t you land--? Where? If you went through this profound analysis of the nature of your own being, your psychological being and you discarded the fact that you were an emotional being or an intellectual or a physical being what would you come up with? Evidently it is obvious that you are discarding the whole notion of the World-Idea which has created the body, alright, through which the soul can operate. You say that’s not me, isn’t that so? If I am not the body, alright, I am rejecting the World-Mind’s production of an entity. I am saying “That’s not me.” Then which way am I going? Isn’t this a kind of psychological introversion that is going to take place? I am going to go into the nature of my own soul and this is what leads eventually into Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

LR: I have to just take your word for it because I haven't had the experience of knowing the difference between penetrating into the silence between thoughts.

AD: But, in the Serpent's exercise when he says now we are going to try to get in between two thoughts, and you know there is a quotation that PB uses. He says there is two kinds of consciousnesses, there is one that is static, always abiding, never changes, and there is another kind which is always in movement, moment by moment. There is two kinds of consciousness that PB speaks about. One that is dynamic and always in motion. That would be the World-Mind's idea of the world. And the other one which is static always self-identical with itself would have to be the nature of YOUR mind or your I AM Principle. Remember we spoke about the soul as having this dual condition? Alright now if we say that in the Serpent's Path exercise he says now what is required is going to be an extremely alert and dynamic attention, that is capable of extreme concentration. Now, what do you think he is talking about? Isn't he talking about the attention that your soul can produce. (Q: reference is to 19.3.182, for two kinds of consciousness; for Serpent's Path ex. see 23.8.159-170 //also *The Wisdom of the Overself*, Ch. 14, ex. 7)

LR: Yeah, of pure awareness.

AD: Yes. It's your soul's awareness, your soul's attention. And he wants you to insert THAT in between two thoughts that the World-Mind is proffering.

LR: So you're saying that a prerequisite to doing that is that you can grab onto the pure awareness of the soul.

AD: Yeah, because if you read that exercise he practically says, now you got to really have your attention all there or you can't do this exercise.

LR: That assumes that you know who you are already.

AD: Well I would be inclined--even if you didn't have the terminology, like for instance Heisenberg had no notion, he didn't study yoga. But his penetration was capable of producing Nirvikalpa Samadhi. And WITH that he was capable of penetrating to some problems as to the nature of matter which made him realize that everything was mental. (Q: ref. is to 22.5.17//Persp. p. 304)

LR: So until you know what the source of the ego is, or until you have some way of identifying with the true source of the ego, it is not possible to investigate further into the World-Idea?

AD: It is not possible to become a philosopher sage. A philosopher sage is the person who has DONE just that. He has achieved the required attention with which he can penetrate into the World-Mind's Idea of the universe and there achieve the union with that Void Mind.

LR: PB does say in the notes that meditation can only take you to that knowledge of what am I. That that's why you need philosophy because if you stuck to meditation you'd never get further than, I mean it is not a near thing but you could only get to the who and what am I and no further. (Q: find correct reference, see 16.2.251 & 16.2.253)

AD: We have also come across the fact, and it's been said very often that part of the purpose of the World-Idea is to educate the soul alright into the nature of its own being and something into the nature of what the World-Idea is. But I don't see what disturbs you so.

LR: Going back to this it said:

PB: “. . . The way to break out of this circle is either to seek out the ego’s source . . .”

LR: And you were talking about that being the analysis of I am not the body, etc. and I asked why it wouldn’t be just to shut down thinking. I mean why that wouldn’t also take you to the ego’s source.

AD: Yeah, but if you shut down thinking aren’t you doing just that, going to Nirvikalpa? If you succeed in stopping all thought?

LR: Yes. And that would be something different from the Serpent’s Path Exercise?

AD: The Serpent’s Path is the deliberate, very carefully calculated, that a person that achieved a certain level of concentration can use that concentration to penetrate into the nature of the World-Idea so it could reach the Void Mind.

LR: I don’t think I’ll be able to grasp the light of understanding unless I...

AD: Think about it. Think about it. These things are not understood overnight but gradually they’ll come to you. Like I told you, you must have faith that it is the higher IN you that understands these things. It won’t be the lower intellect that understands these things. So very often I try to address myself to that higher IN you. And I have to, you know, joke around with the lower.

FINDING A TEACHER – HELP THE SAGE GIVES

LR: So if you can’t do that you should just find a teacher?

AD: Yes, because for some people that’s extremely difficult. You know how many people would go to Ramana and say, “Hey, I’ve been sitting down asking who am I and hammering away for years and I got nowhere” and Ramana would of course say “Oh shut up, sit down and do it.” At other times the fellow would just look at Ramana and he would know, “Well, I’ll sit down next to Ramana,” and he would get it that way.

LR: Well, here I am Anthony. (laughter)

AD: I’m not Ramana. After all, in the case of Ramana if he put his eye on you that was like a divine activity would automatically start. I’m not--what do they call them--a sage, cause there is no ideative activity taking place in a sage. So when he looks at you, it’s just like the divine looking at you and darshan can take place. But I look at you I have all kinds of crummy ideas of what I should do, whether kick you or pull your hair, why are you asking me all these stupid questions. (Q: pause for laughter) So you won’t go the first way, so you go the second--you go find a master alright and you pledge your allegiance, you are devoted to him and no one else.

LD: That’s what Ramakrishna said too, he said all you could do is look for holy men.

AD: The point is that sat-sang or association with holy men is not a physical association. It is much more inward. YOU WOULD KNOW INWARDLY THAT THIS IS YOUR TEACHER. You know your heart tells you “This is my teacher.” You don’t decide to take a trip around the world as soon as you meet him. You usually stay with him unless circumstances or destiny (inaudible) to do something else.

LD: But it seems like for really dense people, physical proximity wouldn't hurt.

AD: Well, that's a beginning, yes. You know PB has a note where he speaks about the way all the students were gathered around Atmananda and there was a very beautiful scene like in this oval. And they were like gathered around him and there were these huge palm trees, you know. It was a very beautiful sight and they were all looking up to Atmananda with feeling of devotion seeking the truth. (Q: ref. is to 15.2.487) Their devotion to their teacher will eventually accrue for them that what they are looking for, cause a sage, like Ramana says once you have pledged to find the truth, a sage is like a tiger. He will pick you up by the neck and he doesn't let you go until that is accomplished. It might take a long time but it will get done.

LD: That spreads out your whole life even when the sage is no longer?

AD: Oh yes. There is a very esoteric quote. I was even surprised that PB had put it in the notes. He says, "There comes a time when the sage is going to incarnate and a call goes out to all the corners of the universe and his students will reincarnate then." His work is very carefully organized. He has to will himself into incarnation. He has to know all these things. But when he does so then the students will at that time reincarnate. I am not saying all at the same day, or at the same hour. (Q: ref. is to DISCIPLESHIP essay: 25.5.274, p. 236) (laughter)

LR: If there's a blackout in New York City, we'll know.

AD: Try to get the quote. Did anybody come across it? It's quite good. It is a quote that puts a feeling in your heart. Next time you come back you'll know your teacher is going to be around. He'll know it, you won't.

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LouisD: I by myself, by my effort cannot produce the Overself consciousness within me, but it does require my effort and if the Overself deigns to come into my consciousness it will happen but I guess we cannot produce it.

AD: Louis, can I, I hope you don't mind, I'm such a bore--. What he means there is that you or I cannot, of our own will, bring about a condition known as enlightenment. That is an infinite knowledge. Only a sage could do that because only a sage HIMSELF is infinite knowledge and can produce an infinite result but you and I as finite beings psychological beings cannot produce infinite results.

VM: Anthony, can't you look at it from the other point of view and say that the ego can't spin out an infinite amount of negativity although it can be very large?

AD: I don't know about that. (laughter)

VM: I thought it was like the cobwebs, even the spider gets exhausted, he can't put out an infinite number of webs. In other words there is an end, even though it may be a very long long time, to the effect of the ego.

AD: Try again please.

LD: Isn't it one way to look at it is the blackboard as the Overself--we draw the circle, which represents the closed ego, within that, on the blackboard, the circle cannot produce the totality of the blackboard, or the whole omnipresence of the Overself.

AH: The same way that the ego can't willingly give itself up. The finite cannot reach the infinite.

TS: The other side is that if the ego is truly finite, and the Overself is truly infinite, then the ego cannot infinitely hold out against the Overself.

VM: But that's nothing to really hope on you know.

AD: Let's try it this way then. No matter how intensely the ego thinks about the Overself, the best that it could do is come up with another thought. Whereas, you sit next to a sage, what could he do? Well, he could stop you from thinking, slow down the mental processes and you could experience that infinite consciousness. So the sage could bring that about, he could bring that about to happen, whereas my ego can't bring that about. In other words, my ego cannot produce this infinite consciousness. Because the best it could do is: "I got another thought--"infinite consciousness, infinite knowledge." So it could go on doing that forever, but never bring about its OWN cessation, whereas the sage can do that, he can produce this infinite result, this infinite activity, this infinite knowledge. Because the experience of your own Overself, or the glimpse of it is infinite. It is an experience of infinity.

EXPECTANCY; DEGREE SYMBOLS SHOW MENTAL TENDENCIES; EGO EXPOSED IN THE VOID

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: "... It [the ego] spins out its thoughts and sends out its desires day after day. ..."

LD: Constantly fabricating images, tendencies, and then desires.

AD: You notice that every day, you notice that?

LD: When I look, I get tired of looking sometimes.

AD: It gets so monotonous, boring, every day the same stupid thoughts, same stupid feelings.

LD: But the thing that bothers me more is I'm still attracted to them.

AD: Even that too, that's a tendency. That attraction to these things, that is a tendency that you've got to recognize. It gets very very monotonous, yes.

LD: That would be the tendency *to* like them and the arising *of* them would be one-side vasanas and--

AD: Even more fundamental than that is EXPECTANCY. You operate always with expectancy, anticipation, always constantly the mind is always expecting, anticipating.

LD: You mean expecting gratification, affirmation or what-- I--

AD: It's looking to an image all the time.

LD: Anything.

AD: An activity. Its own activity. So you have to, after a while, recognize that that activity or that expectation is probably the chief motivation of the mind's functioning. I mean what else? I used to reduce it to expectation. You sit down you know, try to keep quiet, well why are you moving? You want something? Yes, I expect something. Isn't that what you do when you walk down the street, looking around, expecting something? It's always doing that. That's the feeling I recognize, the mind, that expectancy, anticipation, "Gimme, gimme, well, well, where is it, what is it?" Some of the Orientals call it just expectation, that's the name they give the mind--expectation.

LD: It's primarily that, then it gets associated with money, women whatever...

AD: Everything else follows that.

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: ". . . It spins out its thoughts and sends out its desires day after day. They may be likened to cobwebs which are renewed or increased and which never disappear for long from the darkened corners of a room, however often they may be brushed away. . . ."

AD: Remember I told you one of the ways you can look at this is: go to your chart, read the degree symbol. Understand the way it functions and you'll see it is always doing that. You know like I got the degree of the volcano digging in. [Note: Virgo 17, "A vast display of cosmic force is seen in the eruption of a volcano with dust clouds, flowing lava, earth rumblings."] That's the way my mind's got to operate, it doesn't matter. Always got to do that, or it's got to be practical and idealistic, it's always got to work like that. [Note: Libra 6, "A pilgrim sits on a rustic bench and one by one his ideals in a sort of trance-vision take form before him."] And I look at it and there it is, it's doing it all the time, and keeps on doing more of it. Tomorrow it'll do it, the day after, it goes on and on and on. Then you begin to see, you begin to see, "Ah, these are the tendencies that I have," you know, that have been reincarnated life after life and are really very strong now, they produce their own activity.

LD: So can we say that the two processes that we've spoken of before, of working with the ego, one of refinement of that, and two of just stopping it. The former is only brushing the cobwebs away. It will never get to the heart of the matter, that refinement, that endless refinement of the faculties and what have you.

AD: Yeah but that has to be gone through anyway. It's very hard to explain to a Neanderthal man what Nirvikalpa is. Yes, go ahead.

RG: On the will of the ego though, how much of the mind, can it reduce its thinking for example. You just said before in the last sentence that the ego can never get the mind really quiet. That it always produces more thought. The ego can never then succeed at meditating. Isn't that right?

AD: When the time comes and your thought is stopped you'll see that it is a higher power that does it. But that doesn't mean that you won't succeed in slowing it down considerably.

RG: But the actual cessation . . .

AD: But the actual cessation of all thought is something that the higher power, the higher self in you does that. Its sheer presence alone will stop everything.

(Q: Louis reading)

PB: “. . . So long as the spider is allowed to live there, so long will they reappear again. . . .”

LD: So as long as this initial thought of expectancy is allowed to continually manifest and affirm itself, so long as it's allowed to keep spinning out images, desires, it is constantly going to identify with them. And you could get rid of, image by image, but that primal expectancy, as long as that's allowed to stay, more images will arise.

PB: “. . . Tracking down the ego to its lair is just like hunting out the spider and removing it altogether from the room. . . .”

AH: How is the spider to be understood as spinning the web? I can see the web as the thoughts and images, but how should we understand the spider? As an entity?

AD: Yeah, but a pseudo-entity.

AH: Not a real one.

AD: Not a real one. It has no inherent existence. (laughter) But you know, like I told you, if you take all these thoughts that in their togetherness constitute your chart, you could see it function, and you'll see it's like an entity. You'll see it, everyday, the stream of consciousness. You know the notion of the stream of consciousness? Well, believe me, most of the novelists never really looked so deeply into what the stream of consciousness really is because they wouldn't think it's so great.

AH: Is the hunting for the spider the perception of its non-inherence? Let's say one successfully found the spider, is that a way of speaking about the discovery of its non-inherence?

AD: Well that is a way of speaking or recognizing that the ego is it. That's what you've got to go after. You've got to trace it all the way, find it, and if you remember the only way that you could really find it is you've got to approach the confines of Nirvikalpa. Because then it has nowhere to go, then it will be what it is. You'll see it for what it is.

AH: It is a very difficult idea to talk about--to find the source, I just don't have a way of understanding what that means, because every effort is that spider.

AD: Yeah but, you remember one of the remarks that he makes was the fact that when you have a glimpse, two things result from that glimpse and the most important thing is that you recognize the illusory nature of the ego, at that point you recognize it to be illusory. Now after the glimpse is over the ego comes back and reclaims itself. You know it says, “Hey I'm the boss.” It takes over, resumes its former tyranny. But at that moment that you have a glimpse you see that it's really illusory, that you can get along pretty well without egoism. It's only in the experience that it is like this. As soon as you come out-- You remember Ramakrishna was biting an apple, went into samadhi, comes out of samadhi, continues biting the apple. The ego's right there. It takes over as soon as you permit it to.

You've got a great book here. It's a big burden to get this out, the categories, parts and everything. It's a labor of Hercules. The difficulty of course may be that some of it may rub off.

. . . Pick an easy one . . . Oh it's not finished? . . .

TRACING THE EGO TO ITS SOURCE IN CONSCIOUSNESS AND OFFERING IT TO THAT CONSCIOUSNESS

PB: "... There is no more effective or faster way to attain the goal than to ferret out its very source . . ."

LD: I would take that source as this kind of primordial urge, or we just spoke of it as expectancy.

AD: "... ferret out its very source . . ." What is he asking you to do there?

LD: Ferret out the source of the ego.

AD: Yeah what is that?

LD: It's the first I-thought, that original urge--

AD: It's the consciousness.

LD: If that's the consciousness--

AD: Because once you find that consciousness it's to that consciousness that you can offer the ego.

You first have to find that the source within you is this consciousness, because that's what's illuminating all the thought tendencies that constitute, or are, the ego. In other words you have all these thoughts, alright, let's say ten thoughts, but it's this light coming from the Overself that is illuminating them. In themselves they're not conscious. Do you follow that?

LD: Yes.

AD: Do this example: Imagine a dream, there's this imagery of the dream. But the illumination of that dream is different from the images. Now if those images turned and say, "Well what's illuminating me, what's lighting me up?" they'd have to turn to that light, that consciousness. That's their source.

BS: So there's no difference between the--

AD: Without that, you won't know. You won't know anything.

LD: I would see it that way except that they capitalized one 'Source' and not the other, I--

AD: I don't care what they do grammatically (inaudible) I don't care about those things.

LR: One reason it could be this way is not that they are two different things but first to ferret out the ego's source you're getting to something which appears to belong to the ego. Then when you have a glimpse you realize that that is no possession of the ego. That the ego is a possession of it in some way and so there is a switchover in the realization. So it is not capitalized as it appears to be a possession of the ego, but then this surrender to . . .

AD: I'd like to take advantage of this moment and I hope no one thinks I'm criticizing them. I learned this from self criticism, and you could see or I think you'd be able to see, that very often when you're misinterpreting something if you are attentative (sic) enough you can see the way the ego is sliding in and turning things around so that you won't understand it. Try to watch it when you're doing these notes. Try to watch that process. Let's pick it up.

RG: I don't know how you could see it any other way because the 'Source' in the second one when it's capitalized is clear reference to the first source.

(Q: argument about the line between Richard and Louis 2 minutes)

AH: It seems in both cases the source is consciousness.

VM: You're original idea was the source of the ego was this web of expectation which is spun out, was that the idea?

LD: Well that wouldn't be the source it would be the I-thought itself, the first I-thought.

RG: But isn't the I-thought definitive of the ego that they are not two separate things?

TS: But isn't the I-thought part of the World-idea not part of the Overself?

LD: Why don't we just say it the way Anthony said it and go to the last statement ". . . and finally by the path of affirmations and recollections unite oneself with it." Good, he's back--. Anthony, in that--

PB: ". . . There is no more effective or faster way to attain the goal then to ferret out its very source, [the consciousness] offer the ego to that [consciousness, Overself consciousness], and finally by the path of affirmations and recollections . . ."

AD: Yeah that would be the short path. The important thing is first, let's say that it happens, a person meditates very intensely gets a glimpse. He recognizes, once he has the glimpse, the illusory nature of the ego but also its tyrannical sway. Then usually what a person does, is he offers that ego to his higher self. In other words he wants to be of service to the higher power, and all he could do is pray and ask that that be given for him to do. Make sure you know what you're asking for, because this is a big thing. Once you do that, and let's say it's granted, but then there comes a series of lives where the egotism is really crushed. Or you go through a training where you get rid of it. Or you come across a master who will help you get rid of it.

LD: But either way it is a painful process.

AD: Yeah. Of course there are some exceptions, some people can reach it through beauty or joy. But I think that is in a minority. The crushing or, you know, putting the ego down and getting rid of its tyranny is very very difficult. (pause)

LD: (joking) Well I hope you liked my interpretation. (laughter) It was very good; I got him to do a running commentary.

AD: (softly) I hope you don't think that it's MY interpretation, I hope you don't think it's mine. It is something that's given. Remember I want it understood that I make no personal claims. My ego doesn't have that much intelligence and never will. Alright, let's try another one, a small little teeny one. The smaller the better.

FORGIVENESS AND EGO

(Q: S1 is Steve somebody)

S1: I have a very short one. (Q: reading)

PB: “When a man can forgive God all the anguish of his past calamities and when he can forgive other men and women for the wrongs they have done him, he will come to inward peace. For this is what his ego cannot do.” (8.4.349)

S1: It starts with a statement which sounds with the most amazing kind of audacity, the very notion that we would forgive god and that goes onto something that makes a bit more sense forgiving other men and women for the wrongs they have done but we can see something that unites both of those. It is a kind of release a letting go a moving of the self away from the center of the universe, or moving the ego away from the center of the universe, allowing a more impersonal understanding to sweep in. “. . . and then you have inward peace.” And what I like most is what comes after the period, “For this is what the ego cannot do.” That ‘for’ is extremely important, it is not just a flat statement that that this is something the ego cannot do but it is telling us that that inward peace is specifically because it is something that the ego cannot do. That within that very act of release, that very act of impersonalizing, that very stepping away, putting the ego in a different place, a lesser place we are in fact pursuing an act the ego cannot do and thereby finding our way at least toward a kind of inward peace. I like that subtle cognition put in that place.

VM: Can you read that again, maybe one sentence at a time.

S1: Sure, it’s only two sentences. “When a man can forgive God all the anguish of his past calamities . . .”

VM: It does sound strange doesn’t it, that you are going to forgive God.

S1: But there is such a beauty in that strangeness because it’s allowing for a complete demotion of ego, or at least a shoving of it off to somewhere else because in that very act of letting go, in that very release-- I mean when you say the words, “When a man can forgive God” then you’re also saying in the end, in the next act, he can laugh at himself, can laugh at what’s involved in taking that step I think in pushing aside, in decentering.

VM: How about the idea that forgiving God is one way of saying that the ego, after a certain maturation realizes that any suffering, any anguish that it has gone through has been of its own making, in other words it’s taking responsibility for its own suffering, and not accusing God of perpetrating these injustices, these hardships and so on, but in fact this is my due. The kinds of thinking I have had have brought me to this state and it’s not some unjust force in the universe that have brought these calamities on me.

S1: What’s implied in what you’re saying is that it’s not something that is done to him but it is something that is done, something that has a purpose and meaning.

DB: Isn’t there also the implication there that if to forgive God is a worthwhile activity, the implication would seem to me to be that one of the core activities of the ego’s life is a sort of continual state of rebellion and rage against God and to finally give that up could be considered as what this forgiveness might mean. It would only be after that emotional knot has been lived to a point where you’re just sick of it. You can stop that and stop getting antagonistic towards him.

S1: Yes it's a release, a letting go.

TS: I think another interpretation is that, following on what Anthony said earlier, to forgive God for the calamities is to know God as the source of those calamities, I mean you can't forgive something you don't know. Here I would take God to be the Overself, that if that ego, surrendering itself, claims to having glimpsed its higher source, offers itself up, and then endures the process of its own dismantling, at the same time that it goes through that process, and recognizes that it is a higher source, which is doing that dismantling, which is the calamities that the ego experiences to forgive it for its very self, its very destruction seems to be a kind of surrender by that most recalcitrant part of the ego to its source, and that is another way of seeing it.

S1: I like that and I like it especially the way you use surrender in that because it puts a different meaning on the word forgive than we usually put on it. Forgive is usually done from the position of the ego. I have been offended, I forgive. (Q: italicize I's in last sentence.)

AH: There are calamities in our lives. Are we to understand that God is the cause of them?

VM: No it has got to be the ego that causes its own misery.

AH: But how about the calamities that occur to our bodies. Must we understand calamities as being self induced or God induced.

RG: Well, there are both types apparently. Whether God is taken as your own Overself or as the World-Mind, in either case the point is well taken, the idea that you would forgive God and that you now have to take responsibility for your own actions. Forgiving God means you don't blame anyone else for your own karma. Whether it's karma or destiny or fate or any of those things it is still part of your own development.

AH: I was thinking of that Buddhist idea that there is no such thing as righteous indignation.

DB: There is another quote from Ramana that says people are always happy to thank God for the good things that happen to them, if everything is the way they want it. The mistake they make is in not expressing gratitude for some of the suffering because it is said to help them.

PB: “. . . and when he can forgive other men and women for the wrongs they have done him, he will come to inward peace. For this is what his ego cannot do.”

S1: So in either or any of the interpretations we have thrown out here we have still the same punch line, that through that process of surrender, through process of letting go, through that recognition, that the hard destiny that you work out is also an occasion for grace, through those steps you “will come to inward peace. For this is what the ego cannot do.” “For this is what the ego cannot do” tells us that he will come to inward grace because this process takes him to a place the ego cannot entirely follow. Something else has to take command.

AH: In a sense perhaps the forgiving is the removal of the distinction between oneself and others.

RN: I think that we are deepening our understanding of forgiving, and all of these modes of forgiving are difficult but I don't think we've yet found the type of forgiving that the ego literally cannot do. It is

difficult to truly believe that the suffering is part of a lesson, part of our development, but somehow I think that there is more implied here.

DR: Yeah, I get the feeling that this isn't really something you can do. Because if this is something the ego can't do then who is going to do it? It doesn't sound like a forgiveness you can train yourself to be able to do. Like oh yes now I have learned how to forgive God. If it is not the ego's activity then who is going to claim, it seems like it is a signpost or maybe the realized mind finds that this is a condition that he's found existent, and that now there is some kind of indication that he is beyond the ego.

JfL?: I was thinking that it is two aspects. One is that it is the ego's inactivity that shows every time you don't react, you don't think and likewise of course the grace has to come from the Overself.

S1: (Q: Quote read again)

VM: Forgiveness can be done by the ego but peace cannot be attained. Some would argue that forgiveness is not something that the ego cannot be trained to do. That was David's point I thought.

DR: So you're saying that the ego cannot come to inward peace but--

VM: I thought that's what the last clause meant. The meaning of that sentence is what the ego cannot do is attain to the peace. The forgiveness may be a soul or an ego function rather that you can develop over the years perhaps through hard experience but then there are others who say that level of forgiveness is beyond the ego's capability.

S1: It is hard to imagine that the ego can do that I mean what kind of forgiveness could the ego grant. It could grant egotistical forgiveness which seems a rather limited and debased coin. I think the image the quote evokes is something beyond that. All of the things we've been talking about are things the ego can't do, that kind of moving off the center, accepting that our destiny is not something for which you curse the sky.

VM: I agree that the ego is very limited in some sense but I also want to take the point of view that it is the ego that evolves, it is the ego that strives, and it is the ego that eventually becomes enlightened. One of the problems I was having with Jeff's interpretation is that the Overself is perfect, its reflection in me may be distorted.

S1: That the ego can become a pure channel, that it can become a pure instrument.

VM: That the ego does have to do the evolving, the straining, the working, and so on.

S1: And when it becomes that pure instrument then it is not the ego that is going to do the forgiving.

VM: Good, and there is always plenty of room and necessity for grace, on the other hand, I am not clear that the ego can forgive at the level and extent that is being discussed in this quote.

S1: (Q: Quote read again)

BS: So the ego cannot come to inward peace?

RG: It has to be both the inward peace and that kind of forgiveness, because otherwise the second part of the sentence has no meaning. Why would you use that clause otherwise. To forgive all the past calamities,

your whole reincarnated history, and all the pain and suffering which is your ego, how could the ego forgive the Gods for embodying it?

VM: Let's say if you rationally understand, and this is not something I can do, obviously, the power of mentalism, for thought to create its own reality and so forth, then you do take responsibility for the sufferings you've gone through and you don't project it onto fate, providence, the Gods, collective unconsciousness. You say as an embodied entity say, I through my improper thinking have generated this karma and I've got to live it out. That's one way of interpreting this forgiveness.

JfL: What is the improper thinking that you're saying happens?

VM: A million ways. Emotions, desires, expectations, I mean--

AS: I thought what Tim said before was the closest I could come to this forgiveness, to surrender the ego, and that's exactly what it would take to forgive it. Tim was also taking the tack that some of the suffering that comes to the ego *is* through the evolutionary will of the higher self. It's not all recompense and even that kind has to be forgiven. . . . That the only way it could forgive the higher is to finally surrender to it. . .

S1: The structure of the sentence supports that. . . .

AS: I agree that it is that word 'for' that makes it refer to both of the acts . . .

LD: I don't think it is explicit enough. Ego without egotism, when a person is crushed in life, after he goes through enough hard experiences, he could turn around and forgive other people those same faults because he's been through them. An ego that hasn't been through gut wrenching experiences is surely not going to forgive another ego for its vices. When a person turns around and suffers the consequences of his own vices, I think that person, that ego, now that some of the egotism is taken out of it, can turn around and say well I can understand this person has to live out these vices, these desires. I don't know if the quote is explicit enough in the way it goes into ego and egotism.

TS: There is one quote that PB had that struck me as kind of brutal at the time where he says that to forgive these fates for the consequences of the self-created karma, is to postpone perceiving it as such.

VM: Say it again, I--

TS: Well, I'm paraphrasing but, to forgive some outside source for the consequences of some self created karma, is to postpone seeing it as such, that in understanding the consequences of your karma there is nothing, you do own that, whereas you were saying you take responsibility for those bruises that come to you by virtue of seeing that you set it up for yourself, and in the very seeing that you set it up for yourself, then there is no reference to anything outside of it as being the source of it, and that I think is radically different than the two things that are being spoken of in this quote, that is to say that because of the evolution of the World-Idea through historical epoch the individual's own destiny may be inhibited or accelerated or marred by the interaction with other people's, the destiny of the epoch or the era, that is to say you're forgiving the World-Idea. You recognize that the ego's own timed evolution may be modified by the structure of the World-Idea at that moment. You're refunding the reason-principles that constitute the ego back into the World-Idea. That to me is underneath what is meant by forgiving other people.

(VM about to read another para. Bell is rung, signifying end of class.)

AD: We'll have it next week, alright?

[Audio File 1984 0829b Ends]